

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9855

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 1070

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN

SUBJ: INDO-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

1. IN A LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH POLITICAL COUNSELOR ON FEBRUARY 27, ABDUL BARI, DIRECTOR-GENERAL IN MFA FOR SUB-CONTINENT, MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON INDO-BANGALEE RELATIONS WHICH, ALTHOUGH THEY REPEAT TO SOME EXTENT WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY BEEN TOLD BY OTHER OFFICIALS, PROVIDE GREATERS DETAIL ON SOME OF THE POINTS DISCUSSED:

2. FARAKKA BARRAGE -- A VARIETY OF STATISTICAL MATERIAL IS BEGINNING TO BE DRAWN TOGETHER WHICH REVEALS THE EFFECT OF DIVERSIONS OF GANGE WATER AT FARAKKA, AND THE PICTURE IS TROUBLING. CHARTS HAVE BEEN PREPARED WHICH SHOW THE WATER LEVELS AT HARDING BRIDGE FAR BELOW THE AVERAGE (COPIES OF THESE GRAPHS WERE FORWARDED TO THE DEPARTMENT BY DACCA'S A-17 OF FEBRUARY 27). SALINITY IS A GROWING PROBLEM, HAVING RISEN 300 PERCENT SINCE THIS TIME LAST YEAR. THE PAPER MILL AT KHULNA WHICH NORMALLY DRAWS ITS SUPPLIES CONFIDENTIAL

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FROM THE RIVER BHAIRAB IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF THE PLANT MUST NOW BRING WATER BY BARGE FROM A POINT 25 MILES UP STREAM. AN EVEN GREATER PROBLEM LIES IN THE SUB-SURFACE SALINIZATION WHICH THE CONTINUED DIVERSIONS AT FARAKKA

THREATEN. THIS WILL NOT RPT NOT OCCUR QUICKLY; BARI SUGGESTED TWO TO THREE YEARS OF OPERATION OF THE BARRAGE AT PRESENT LEVELS WOULD BE REQUIRED BEFORE THE EFFECT IS DISCERNIBLE. HOWEVER, UNLESS THE DIVERSIONS ARE HALTED FOR AT LEAST SOME RELATIVELY LENGTHY PERIOD EACH YEAR, THE RESULTS OVER THE TWO/THREE YEAR PERIOD WILL BE TO CREATE A LEVEL OF SALINITY WHICH NOT RPT NOT ONLY TAKES LAND OUT OF PRODUCTION BUT IS IRREVERSIBLE.

3. REGARDING EFFORTS TO GET NEGOTIATIONS GOING, BARI SAID THAT BANGLADESH IS, AS FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN TOLD US ON FEBRUARY 23 (DACCA 0921), NO RPT NO LONGER DEMANDING AN OUTRIGHT CESSATION OF THE DIVERSIONS AT FARAKKA AS A PRECERNIBLE FROM THE INDIANS WHICH ALLOWS BANGLADESH TO GO TO THE BARGAINING TABLE WITH SOME MEASURE OF PRIDE AND DIGNITY. BARI SAID, "WE'VE LEFT IT FUZZY; WE ONLY ASK THAT THE INDIANS DO SOMETHING THAT WILL BE NOTICED BY THE BANGALEES."

4. BORDER TALKS -- BARI CONFIRMED, PERHAPS A SHADE MORE CANDIDLY, WHAT WE HAD ALREADY BEEN TOLD ABOUT THE FEBRUARY 12-14 BORDER TALKS (SEE DACCA 0805, 0888 AND 0921). HE DESCRIBED THE MEEETING AS "FIRECRACKERS AT THE OUTSET" WHICH THE STEADINESS AND FIRMNESS OF GENERAL DASTGIR EVENTUALLY BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL. BARI SAID THAT THE INDIANS WANTED TO DISCUSS NEWSPAPER TREATMENT IN BANGLADESH OF THE BORDER INCIDENTS BEFORE TAKING UP ANYTHING ELSE. GENERAL DASTGIR REPLIED THAT HIS BRIEF LIMITED HIM TO DISCUSSING THE BORDER INCIDENTS ONLY, AND THAT THIS WAS THE AGREED-UPON REASON FOR THE MEETING. MOREOVER, WHATEVER HAD APPEARED IN THE PRESS SIMPLY MIRRORED COMMON KNOWLEDGE, AND THE BDG WAS NOT RPT NO ABOUT TO TRY TO PRETEND TO THE BANGALEES THAT NOTHING WAS HAPPENING LEST ITS OWN CREDIBILITY BE UNDERMINED. WHEN THE INDIANS STILL PERSISTED, GENERAL DASTGIR SAID THAT THERENGAS THEN NO RPT NO REASON TO CONTINUE THE MEETING. CONFRONTED WITH THE LIVE POSSIBILITY OF A BREAKDOWN, THE INDIANS RESILED AND TOOK UP THE AGREED-CONFIDENTIAL

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UPON MATTERS. BARI SAID THAT HE NOW HAS A FRESH WORRY AKUSING OUT OF THE MEETING. THE DELEGATIONS HAD AGREED TO BEGIN A JOINT INQUIRY WITHIN FIFTEEN DAYS OF THE MEETING, BUT WITH ONLY TWO DAYS TO GO, NOTHING HAD BEEN HEARD FROM THE INDIANS.

5. WHAT ARE THE INDIANS UP TO? -- BARI SAID THAT THERE ARE NUMBERING OF MUIBBADIS IN INDIA, A FACT WHICH IS TROUBLING. HE SAID THAT THERE ARE 20-25 EX-MPS IN CALCUTTA WHO HAVE BEEN GIVEN SANCTUARY AND SUCCOUR; THIS GROUP IS NOW IN TOUCH WITH MEMBERS OF THE ERSTWHILE BAKSAL JUBO AND CHHATRO LEAGUES WHOSE YOUTHFUL MEMBERS ARE RECEIVING TRAINING IN CAMPS JUST ACROSS THE BORDER IN INDIA. BARI

ADDED THAT SHEIKH MUJIB'S DAUGHTERS ARE LIVING IN NEW DELHI, AND THE HUSBAND OF ONE HAS BEEN GIVEN EMPLOYMENT IN THE INDIAN ATOMIC ENERGY ESTABLISHMENT. M.R. ("MUKUL") AKHTAR, THE FORMER DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF RADIO BANGLADESH AND MORE RECENTLY PRESS ATTACHE AT THE BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSION IN LONDON HAS BEEN SEEN IN NEW DELHI, BUT HAS MADE NO RPT NO CONTACT WITH THE BANGLADESH MISSION THERE. ALL OF THIS IS, SAID BARI, TROUBLING.

6. PRESSED FOR HIS ASSESMENT OF WHAT THE INDIANS SOUGHT TO ACHIEVE, BARI SAID THAT HE CONCLUDES THAT THEY HAVE THREE, CLOSELY INTERRELATED GOALS:

- (1) TO REMIND THE PRESENT REGIME OF THE NECESSSITY OF KEEPING INDIA'S GOOD WILL;
- (2) TO INCREASE THE BDG'S AMENABILITY TOWARD INDIAN POSITIONS; AND IF POSSIBLE,
- (3) TO REGAIN SOMETHING OF THE FAVORED STATUS ENJOYED PRIOR TO AUGUST 15.

BOSTER

CONFIDENTIAL

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